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FBR flags tax evasion in Sindh solar imports

• Report highlights trade-based money laundering in solar kit imports • Senate panel fumes over absence of economic minister, provincial secretaries

By Khaleeq Kiani

ISLAMABAD: Another episode of massive under-invoicing for tax evasion and trade-based money laundering through the import of solar kits came to light before a parliamentary committee, which expressed serious displeasure over the continued absence of the minister for economic affairs and provincial secretaries.

The Senate Secretariat released selected operational parts of a report presented to the Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), detailing grave irregularities in the import of solar home system kits under the Sindh Solar Energy Project (SSEP).

The report revealed that solar kits were declared at \$16-\$23.4 per unit for tax purposes by contractors, while payments of up to \$112.44 per unit, or about 700 per cent higher, were made by the World Bank for the SSEP, reflecting a difference of \$89-96 per unit. Investigations are underway into trade-based money laundering, tax evasion, fund layering and violations of foreign exchange rules.

According to the report, M/s Beyond Green, Karachi, imported 10 consignments comprising 200,968 solar home system units between December 2024 and July 2025 through clearing agent M/s Vista Impex. The goods were declared under HS Codes 8501.7210 and 8501.711, attracting zero customs duty, 18pc sales tax, 3pc additional sales tax and zero income tax. Declared unit values ranged from \$16.1 to \$23.4, and four consignments were cleared through the Green Channel.

Subsequent verification revealed that the goods declarations (GDs) submitted to the Sindh government were either fake or tampered with, a fact officially conveyed on Oct 9, 2025. Further investigation showed that the same kits were supplied to the Sindh government at manifold

higher prices.

Official contracts under the SSEP with M/s Shenzhen LEMI Technology Development Co Ltd, China, revealed a contractual price of approximately \$112.44 per kit, excluding duties and taxes. The World Bank reportedly paid this amount directly to the supplier, the FBR report said.

For tax purposes, the transactional value was worked out at \$103.08 per unit, leading to the forwarding of 10 contraventions to customs adjudication authorities. Show-cause notices have been issued and the matter is pending adjudication.

The Senate committee was informed that fake invoices amounting to \$12.5 million were also generated. In addition, evidence suggested third-party remittances routed through UAE-based entities, raising alarms of trade-based money laundering, foreign exchange violations and fund layering. The case has been referred for proceedings under the Anti-Money Laundering Act 2010, while a comprehensive sales tax audit has been recommended.

The committee was told that the SSEP implementation period ended on July 31, 2025, but around 30,000 solar kits out of 200,000 could not be distributed within the planned period and would now be handled under a separate arrangement.

Following the identification of discrepancies, the Sindh cabinet had on Dec 1, 2025 referred the matter to the Enquiries and Anti-Corruption Establishment (EACE). A forensic audit has also been approved and is underway, while the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has taken cognisance of the case and is actively investigating.

On these revelations, committee chairman Saifullah Abro asked whether any suspensions of suspected officials had taken place and was informed that no suspensions had occurred so far. He directed that a letter be written to the chief minister to ensure that all individuals involved were held accountable.

als involved were held accountable.

Minister's absence

Earlier, the Senate panel expressed sharp criticism over the continued absence of Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Khan Cheema and senior bureaucrats, as well as the participation of junior officers from provincial governments, terming it a serious disregard for parliamentary oversight.

An additional secretary from the Economic Affairs Division informed the committee that the minister was attending the World Economic Forum in Davos. The explanation failed to satisfy the senators, with PPP Senator Waqar Mehdî remarking that he did not recall the minister ever attending a committee meeting and demanding that the minister's chair be removed.

Chairman Saifullah Abro reminded the meeting that parliamentary rules were explicit, stating that the membership of a committee member or the minister could be cancelled in case of absence on three occasions without prior notice.

"If the minister wants to increase corruption, then he should definitely not be in the committee, but if he wants to stop corruption, then he should come to the committee," he said, directing that a message be conveyed to the minister that he had not been attending the panel for two years.

"We are not removing the minister's chair, but tell him that this behaviour is not good," Senator Abro said.

During the meeting, agenda items related to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa projects were postponed and provincial officers were asked to leave after it emerged that officials below grade-20 had been deputed to represent the province.

The committee decided that a formal letter be written to the KP chief secretary to ensure that provincial secretaries attend the next meeting, failing which the matter would be referred to the Privileges Committee.



CRACKS have appeared in the Yeshkuk area of Chipurson after Monday's quake.—Photo by the writer

Relief efforts intensify in Chipurson Valley after GB quake

GILGIT: Traffic on the Chipurson Valley road, located near the Pakistan-China border close to the Khunjerab Pass, has been restored while government departments, non-governmental organisations, and community groups have dispatched relief items to people affected by the recent quake in the remote valley of Gojal in Upper Hunza.

Local residents and political leaders have urged the government to declare Chipurson a calamity-hit area and provide immediate assistance to the affected population.

On the instructions of Gilgit-Baltistan caretaker chief minister retired Justice Yar Muhammad, the GB Disaster Management Authority sent tents, food packs, kerosene heaters, blankets, warm clothes, and shawls to the affected communities. The link road to Chipurson, which had been blocked at several points, was reopened on an emergency basis.

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake jolted Gilgit-Baltistan on Monday, killing one person, injuring four others, and damaging dozens of houses, cattle sheds, and public and private infrastructure. Rescue 1122 reported that Chipurson Valley was the worst-affected area.

Hunza Deputy Commissioner Nizamuddin told *Dawn* that road access had been blocked and large cracks had appeared in homes, roads, and water channels supplying power houses. NGOs and community organisations from Karimabad, Gulmit, and nearby areas have launched relief campaigns, collecting firewood, food, and tents.

Local residents said over 200 families were forced to live in tents amid sub-zero temperatures, making survival especially difficult for children, elderly people, women, and patients.—Jamil Nagri

PTI leaders condemn move to raise voting age from 18 to 25

Five incarcerated leaders term move a desperate attempt to suppress voice

By Mansoor Malik

LAHORE: Five senior Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leaders, currently imprisoned at Kot Lakhpat jail, have slammed the proposal to raise the voting age from 18 to 25, branding it a "desperate attempt to suppress voices of the youth" and "a clear sign of fearing the power of informed conscience".

In a letter sent through their advocate on Wednesday, jailed leaders Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Dr Yasmin Rashid, Ejaz Chaudhry, Mian Mahmoodur Rasheed and Omar Sarfaraz Cheema asked whether those operating in the dark were afraid of youth power.

There is an emerging political discussion in the country about raising the voting age from 18 to 25. While no formal bill has been

tabled yet, the idea is being floated through media commentary, social media narratives, and informal political signaling—a live political narrative with serious democratic implications.

The PTI leaders said Pakistan had seen its first general elections in 1970, where voting age was 21 years. However, at the advent of 21st century the world transformed into a global village and any incident anywhere in the world could be seen in real time.

At this time, the PTI leaders said, Pakistan too realised that the voter age limit should be reduced from 21 years to 18 years. And no segment of society objected to it, they added.

Since the government has fixed 18 years of age to obtain a national identity card, driving licence and even to get married, they said there was no justification to increase the age limit from 18 to 25.

"Is this mindset suggesting signs of fear from the youth power and distrusting the conscience of youth," they jointly stated in their letter.

They said a similar election

reform of making graduation compulsory to contest elections was made in the past but had to be withdrawn later. They said the youth's insight, perception, decision-power and collective wisdom was the nation's asset and it could be used to do wonders in the country.

The jailed leaders warned that the youth would not let the wheel of history move backwards and fight against the 'fear-driven mindset'.

The PTI leaders expressed the hope that all political parties in the country, particularly PML-N, PPP would not support any fear-driven mindset to suppress youth's right to vote.

The social media commentators have publicly dismissed the idea, stating it contradicts global democratic practices. Analysts say such a move would amount to disenfranchisement of the youth rather than reform.

The social media users also point out that raising the voting age would require a constitutional amendment, needing a two-thirds majority in parliament—a high legal and political threshold.

IHC seeks replies in contempt plea over jail meeting denial

Justice Tahir asks how PTI founder's X case can proceed in absence of lawyer-client consultation

By Malik Asad

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday sought written responses in a contempt of court petition filed over the failure to allow PTI founder Imran Khan's counsel, Salman Akram Raja, to meet his client despite court orders.

Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir, while hearing the petition, directed the Islamabad advocate general's office and the public prosecutor to submit written replies. The court also expressed dissatisfaction with the response submitted by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) regarding the closure of the PTI founder's X account.

The judge remarked that the PTA had failed to properly address the contents of the writ petition, observing, "You should see what

the writ petition is and what your response is."

He noted that responses had already been received from jail authorities, the PTA and other respondents. However, he termed the PTA's reply "unsatisfactory".

During the hearing, Mr Raja informed the court that he had been unable to hold a consultation meeting with Mr Khan in connection with the case.

Lawyer access

Justice Tahir observed that without such a meeting, it would be difficult for the proceedings to move forward. He added that final arguments would be heard on Feb 24 if the meeting was allowed.

During the hearing, the public prosecutor took the position that cases involving meetings with prisoners were generally heard by a larger bench.

However, the judge questioned how the case could proceed in the absence of lawyer-client consultation. He added that effective legal representation required access to the client.

Mr Raja told the court that an earlier order dated Nov 4, directing jail authorities to facilitate his meeting with Mr Khan, had not

been implemented for more than two months. He said he had not met his client since the filing of the present case and questioned whether he should personally go to Adiala Jail to seek compliance.

Justice Tahir responded that an appropriate order would be issued and clarified that the case would proceed once the meeting was allowed. The court subsequently adjourned the hearing until Feb 24.

Later, speaking to the media, Mr Raja it was inconceivable that the case pertained to the closure of Mr Khan's X account, adding that serious allegations such as "against the state" could be made against an individual without allowing him the opportunity to present a defence.

Mr Raja also criticised delays in the hearing of appeals and suspension matters related to Mr Khan, including the £190 million corruption case, stating that matters which should be decided within weeks had remained pending for over a year.

Referring to a recent incident on Adiala Road, Mr Raja alleged that PTI workers, including women, were subjected to violence during a "peaceful protest".

Quetta woman moves FCC to lodge kidnap FIR

Petitioner says police refused to find whereabouts of her parents, yet BHC rejected her plea

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD: A woman from Quetta on Wednesday approached the Federal Constitutional Court (FCC), challenging the police's refusal to register an FIR into the alleged abduction of her parents, who have been missing since September 2025.

Through her counsel, Umer Ijaz Gilani, Bibi Shukria of Quetta challenged the Dec 16, 2025 order of the Balochistan High Court (BHC), which upheld the police's refusal to register the FIR by rejecting her plea.

The dispute stems from a family rivalry following the death of Haji

Bari Dad in July 2024. The petitioner's sister was his second wife. Bari Dad's son from his first wife, Naimatullah Agha, a senior government official, was accused of orchestrating a series of retaliatory actions against Shukria's family.

In 2024, Shukria's widowed sister and her children were allegedly confined and tortured by Naimatullah Agha.

The petitioner contended that she had been deprived of her fundamental right to have a cognisable offence investigated, stating that Naimatullah and his companions had allegedly abducted her parents, but the local police refused to register the case.

The petition claimed that the police were simply refusing to investigate the allegations or make any effort whatsoever to recover her missing parents.

According to the petition, her parents, Shah Zaman and Bakht Nama, have been missing since Sept 16, 2025, and by refusing to register an FIR and investigate the matter, the

state has failed to fulfill its obligation to probe the alleged disappearance.

The petition pleaded that in seeking the realisation of her basic right to have the abduction of her parents investigated, she had approached multiple forums.

Having exhausted all available legal remedies, she had now moved the FCC as the last forum for the enforcement of her rights as well as those of her abducted parents.

It was pleaded that law enforcement personnel allegedly acting at the behest of the senior official conducted raids on four houses belonging to the petitioner's family, abducted family members and sealed their houses.

The official allegedly used his influence to have the family's CNICs blocked and subsequently had the entire family illegally deported to Afghanistan. However, it added, Afghan authorities verified their Pakistani nationality and sent them back to Pakistan.

Against this alleged illegal opera-

tion and arbitrary exercise of power, the petitioner filed an application for the registration of an FIR, which was not entertained.

She then filed a petition under Section 22-A of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), which was also dismissed.

Subsequently, the petitioner's husband, Farid Ahmed, was allegedly abducted on Sept 1, 2025 and went missing.

She filed a habeas corpus petition, and although the concerned court issued a production order, it later disposed of the case.

The petitioner then filed another petition under Section 22-A of the CrPC for the registration of an FIR against Naimatullah in connection with the alleged abduction of her husband from their house on Qamrani Road, Quetta.

The Justice of Peace, after hearing the parties, allowed the petition and directed the SHO, Industrial Area, to receive the application and proceed in accordance with law by registering the FIR against the

alleged individuals.

The petition argued that the BHC had based its order on considerations that were totally irrelevant, adding that the only relevant consideration for the registration of an FIR was whether the application disclosed the commission of a cognisable offence. Once such an allegation is made, the registration of an FIR becomes mandatory, while questions relating to the veracity of the allegations are to be examined at a later stage.

It further argued that the existence of a civil dispute within a family did not deprive citizens of their right to seek investigation by state authorities into a cognisable offence. If such reasoning were accepted, most FIRs ever registered in the country would be rendered illegal.

The petition maintained that the high court's ruling set a dangerous precedent, would render the criminal justice system inaccessible, and would create impunity for powerful offenders.

NA body 'unlawfully' regularised contractual workers

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) has ruled that a parliamentary committee unlawfully assumed the role of the executive and the judiciary by issuing directions for the regularisation of hundreds of contractual and daily-wage workers.

An IHC division bench, comprising Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Justice Raja Inaam Ameen Minhas, gave this ruling on Tuesday while dismissing a large number of intra-court appeals and upholding a single bench verdict which had declared that the directions issued by a Special Committee of the National Assembly for the reinstatement and regularisation of sacked employees had no legal effect and were void.

In its detailed judgement, the bench held that while the proceedings of the special committee, to the extent of examining matters and submitting a report to the House, were within the constitutional framework, the directions issued by it to executive authorities relating to reinstatement, regularisation, seniority, pay fixation and the initiation of coercive measures were without lawful authority.

"The recommendations of the Special Committee, insofar as they purported to bind the executive or override statutory provisions and judicial pronouncements, do not enjoy protection under Article 69(1) of the Constitution and were rightly declared void," the court ruled.—Staff Reporter